

HOW THE “SERTU” APPLICABLE IN MALAYSIA

The significance of Halal extends beyond a mere symbol of cleanliness and quality; it embodies a lifestyle embraced not only by Muslims but also by non-Muslims. As the demand for Halal-certified products and services surges globally, its scope has expanded from food to encompass cleanliness, safety, and quality assurance in various processes. The essence of Halal compliance lies in adherence to Islamic dietary laws, emphasizing both physical and spiritual cleanliness.

The certification process, extending through the supply chain, emphasizes not just the final product but the entire production journey. However, challenges arise in maintaining Halal status, especially concerning equipment contamination and the implementation of sertu. Establishing clear guidelines becomes imperative to ensure uniformity and adherence to Halal standards across industries, enabling wholesalers, retailers, and service providers to meet Halal compliance effectively.

The concept of Sertu, or the cleansing process, is deeply rooted in ensuring the purity and cleanliness required by Islamic law, particularly in the context of halal compliance. Various definitions and interpretations of najis, impurities according to Islamic law, guide the Sertu process. The meticulous seven-step cleansing, including the use of soil in the initial wash, underscores the stringent purification of mughallazah najis, such as that from dogs and pigs, adhering to the Shafie school of thought as adopted in Malaysia. Nonetheless, diverse opinions among Islamic scholars exist regarding the necessity of soil in this purification ritual, showcasing the multifaceted interpretations of Shariah law and the contextual suitability of different viewpoints. The complexity of these interpretations underscores the significance of respecting and understanding diverse perspectives within Islamic jurisprudence.

In Islamic jurisprudence, the practice of Sertu, particularly according to the Shafie School, holds significant importance in dealing with impurities like pigs, dogs, and their offspring. , it was narrated by

Abu Hurairah RA, the Prophet PBUH said: *“The cleansing of the utensil belonging to one of you, after it has been licked by a dog, is to wash it seven times, and using soil for cleaning at the first time.”*.

The Hadith narrations, especially those emphasizing the cleansing of utensils licked by dogs, underscore the necessity of thorough purification.

The Shafie School's perspective emphasizes the necessity of a soil-water mixture for cleaning najis derived from dogs and pigs. Furthermore, scholars apply analogy (qiyas) to determine the purification process for other impurities, such as pig excrement, as explicitly

prohibited in the Quran. This approach, rooted in teachings and interpretations of Islamic law, plays a crucial role in maintaining spiritual cleanliness. Today, considering the sensitivity of certain equipment to regular soil, establishing standards for designated soil usage becomes imperative in maintaining these purification practices.

Ensuring the integrity of halal products throughout the supply chain, from production to consumption, stands as a critical concern in the halal industry. The 'farm to table' process encompasses various logistics activities, raising questions about the authenticity and purity of halal items. To maintain halal integrity, comprehensive understanding and implementation of halal practices across the supply chain are essential. This involves meticulous segregation of halal ingredients and final products from non-halal substances, such as pork or alcohol, at every stage—from sourcing to delivery. Halal logistics, a vital component of supply chain management, requires rigorous adherence to Shariah principles in handling, transporting, and storing halal items. Physical segregation and strict adherence to halal standards during warehousing and transportation are crucial to prevent contamination and uphold halal integrity. Thus, the implementation of the sertu process becomes pivotal in various aspects of the halal industry, ensuring cleanliness, hygiene, and adherence to halal standards across logistics operations.

The legal framework governing Sertu in Malaysia's halal industry is robust and multifaceted, involving several standards and guidelines set by JAKIM and recognized authorities. These encompass the Manual Procedure for Malaysia Halal Certification, Malaysian Standards MS1500:2019 and MS2400:2019, detailing requirements for halal products and supply chain management. Sertu procedures, integral to maintaining halal integrity, are extensively defined in these standards, outlining rigorous cleansing processes aligned with Shariah law. Supervision and verification by competent authorities or trained personnel are crucial, ensuring adherence to Shariah procedural requirements during the Sertu process.

Documenting these procedures is imperative for traceability, auditing, and maintaining the integrity of the halal logistics system. Key authorities such as JAKIM, JAIN, and MAIN oversee and regulate the sertu process, from certification to audits, playing a pivotal role in resolving issues and improving guidelines related to Sertu in the industry. Halal logistics and supply chain management, fundamental to preserving halal integrity, align with the principles of Shariah law, ensuring the proper flow, storage, and handling of halal products from production to consumption. However, implementing Sertu within halal logistics and supply chains poses various challenges, underscoring the critical need for adherence to Shariah-based procedures and meticulous

management practices to maintain halal integrity throughout these processes.

While the implementation of Sertu in halal logistics faces several challenges and issues. Firstly, there's a lack of collaboration between logistics providers and halal authorities, leading to varied adoption rates of sertu cleansing among companies, impacting the trustworthiness of halal products. Secondly, insufficient awareness about halal logistics, especially in certain regions, inhibits the uptake of these practices, creating difficulties in market penetration. Additionally, implementing and sustaining halal procedures require significant time and commitment from companies, involving the development of new SOPs and infrastructure adjustments. Moreover, the low demand for halal logistics services due to perceived high operating costs further hinders widespread adoption.

In related cases, incidents involving the intrusion of animals into commercial and religious premises necessitated extensive sertu processes to ensure cleanliness and halal integrity. These events underscored the importance of following proper cleansing procedures in accordance with Shariah law, despite the associated costs and inconveniences. Overall, these challenges highlight the necessity for increased awareness, standardized practices, and collaborative efforts to overcome obstacles and maintain halal integrity in logistics. The significance of Halal goes far beyond a simple marker of cleanliness and quality; it embodies a lifestyle embraced not just by Muslims but by people of various backgrounds. Its demand globally has expanded its scope from food to encompass cleanliness, safety, and quality assurance in various processes.

Thus halal compliance isn't just about the end product but the entire journey of production, and maintaining this status presents challenges, especially regarding equipment contamination and implementing Sertu.